

Advent Lutheran Church: Censorship – 2nd Letter – November 7, 2011

To: Advent Lutheran Church Council,
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Fm: Charlie Dean, member of Advent Lutheran Church, Houston, TX

Date: November 7, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of our Church Council:

This is the **second letter in a series** addressing **Council's censorship of non-exempt material** and the controversy growing out of it. It is my intent, by posting this on the Internet, to show that there is a process by which a lone church member can hold officers accountable, and especially so when the process has been hijacked by those in control of the process.

Each time I attempt to meet with any of you, it is with hope of an open and trusting relationship. The meeting I had on 11/03/2011 with James Cassens, Mark Dentler, and our Pastor was a disappointment. Again I saw Council members manipulating the system, misrepresenting and misconstruing facts, and pretending to have more authority than they really have. You have the power, but not the right, to do this. **When you abuse your authority it creates correlative authority for me to call you down in a public forum.**

What this controversy is NOT about

Contrary to the slant of an August 2, 2011 email that was sent to many church members, this controversy is not about what we believe Advent's mission (purpose) is about. It is not about whether the Pastor's job is to baptize, confirm the faith, perform marriage unions, council members, bury the dead, or whether the pastor does an excellent job. This controversy is not about whether our church secretary's job is keeping books, publishing weekly bulletins, assisting the Pastor, or does a great job. Nor is it not about whether our church Council is composed of volunteer lay persons. Nor is it about Church budgets or whether budgets are biblical, or needed to keep the lights and air conditioning on. Nor is it about the comfort of the congregation, or about any past discussions of the budget. This controversy is not about how up to date in the computer age Advent is in comparison to other churches. These are deliberate attempts to divert attention.

Council's goal has been to keep censorship of non-exempt material unrecognized. 'Round, and 'round, and 'round, as it tries to linguistically camouflage its actions. However, in each attempt by Council to perpetuate censorship and intimidate anyone who might take a different position, Council members make a statement about themselves. The harder Council members fight

censorship of non-exempt material, the more people will notice it. Censorship of non-exempt material is almost always a fool's mission.

An old trick

Council uses an old trick called “conclusive presumption” to bootstrap itself into justification for censorship. Council presumes into existence facts that do not exist in actuality. Here is how it works. Council has a desire to censor, and based on this desire, Council makes two classes of presumptions:

First, Council conclusively presumes that **harm** (an impediment to Advents “statement of purpose”) would come from a church member having possession of the material, organizing it, and displaying it. Essentially, Council takes a theoretical or hypothetical argument and treats it as a fact because it is convenient.

Second, Council conclusively presumes **excuses** for its desire to censor in the first place. Council presumes that it would be overly inconvenient not to censor, that it would be very costly not to censor, and that Council lacks technology and know-how to not censor. Again, Council creates its own facts.

Council then **highjacks** to system to prevent any church member from arguing against its conclusive presumptions, after all they are conclusive. Council does this with no guidance or authority from the Constitution. This procedure is quite handy for bootstrapping.

Council’s present trajectory will not produce a solution

Council officers are all-rounders at finding ways to avoid explaining why material does not fit the bill for executive session or personnel status (“non-exempt material”). This goes to the heart of the controversy. There is no authority in Advent’s governing document for acting like an ostrich. Further, there is no more chance that Council’s ostrich approach will produce a solution than there is that a monkey at a typewriter will produce the Lord’s Prayer.

A bit of levity

A bit of levity always helps one deal with a controversy. I suggest you visit David Peterson’s rendition of “Rattlesnakin’ Daddy.” < <http://youtu.be/D0L-M4trkpw> />

In light of Council’s failure to provide an explanation for its censorship of non-exempt material, I looked for an explanation elsewhere. I believe I found one. An editor for *The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown* had an interview with a church leader of another Lutheran church about a similar censorship problem. It might be instructive in our present controversy. The interview follows.

The Redneck Lutheran Lowdown

Interview with Chummy Editor and Otto Autocrat, councilmember of the Hardcore Lutheran Church.



Chummy Editor



Otto Autocrat

Chummy: Hi, Otto. I understand your brethren had a shin dig last month.

Otto: We sure did. You can see our band members in our Fellowship Hall cranking out *Hand Me Down My Walking Cane* on the Internet.
< <http://youtu.be/oNoexrYo5wc> />

Chummy: I'll look at it in due time. I believe you wanted to tell me about stovepiping.

Otto: Yes, Chummy. This is important. As you may recall, a stovepipe functions as an isolated conduit, either vertical or horizontal.

Chummy: I'm afraid my upbringing is lacking.

Otto: Well, mine's not. Where I grew up, we had a wood stove in the middle of the house. The stove pipe went straight up and out the roof.

Chummy: Was that in the living room?

Otto: Yes it was. That room also served as the kitchen and two bedrooms.

Chummy: Was the bathroom in there too?

Otto: No, it was out back. But listen. Us cronies use this concept when we want to trot out information to the congregation that supports certain conclusions.

Chummy: What conclusions would that be?

Otto: That's the ones we've decided on.

Chummy: Yall's management process of impeccable.

Otto: We've got to dummy things down a little for the congregation you know.

Chummy: Is that concept complicated?

Otto: Heck nawh. It just involves stovepiping stuff to a group of nice folks whose culture,

education, and creativity is lacking. We don't want things to be complicated.

Chummy: I heard that the George W. Bush administration did a lot of stovepiping.

Otto: Yep, and that's a good model to follow here at Hardcore Lutheran Church.

Chummy: Otto, is there another controlling technique that you can tell me about?

Otto: Yes, we use the empty rhetoric doctrine quite often. This technique can evoke emotional appeal and it can assuage anxieties. It's good for silencing dissent before it even starts.

Chummy: Your management skills are so impressive.

Otto: It takes skill, my friend. We organize and coordinate activities in accordance with our policies and in achievement of our objectives. Let me point out that censorship is constructed for a purpose to facilitate an activity.

Chummy: How is censorship constructed for a purpose?

Otto: Well, it's constructed by us cronies. And it is purposeful. What I mean is that it serves a purpose. And it is of a facilitating nature.

Chummy: What could it possibly facilitate?

Otto: Business of the church. It's sorta like a country club you know. Censorship makes a business run smooth.

Chummy: What material, in your opinion, should be available to a church member?

Otto: It depends on who's asking, what he wants, and why.

Chummy: Are you saying that one person may have access to non-exempt material while another person may not?

Otto: Yes.

Chummy: Does the reason for the request help you decide whether to give access or not?

Otto: Yes, of course.

Chummy: How do you justify that?

Otto: The operative word here is facilitate. If it makes things easier on us head cronies, then we do it that way.

Chummy: This has been an informative interview. But, our time is up. Thanks for the interview.

Otto: Thanks for having me. I look forward to the next one.
